



Wyoming County Commissioners Association

P.O. Box 86 • 408 W 23rd Street • Cheyenne, WY • 82003
(307) 632-5409 • www.wyo-wcca.org

To: Members of the Select Federal Natural Resource Management Committee

From: Wyoming County Commissioners Association

Date: November 29, 2021

Re: Wyoming Congressional Tour Initiative Proposal

Introduction

The following memorandum provides an overview of the Wyoming Congressional Tour Initiative (the "Initiative"), a program under which Wyoming counties would annually host staffers from the United States Congress on a tour of public lands and resources in the state. The tour would provide an opportunity for Wyoming counties to share with politically and geographically diverse staffers the importance of public lands and resources to Wyoming's economy and communities.

Program Overview

Under the Initiative, counties will invite U.S. Congressional staffers to Wyoming to tour the state's public lands and resources and discuss natural resource issues important to state and local economies, custom and culture.

Tour Participants

WCCA and counties will work with our federal delegation and Big Horn Public Affairs, our retained consultant, to recruit staffers with geographically and politically diverse backgrounds. Ideally, the program will attract staffers who may not know or appreciate the importance of public lands and resources to Wyoming and the challenges that their management can pose to our state's economy and communities.

Tour Agendas

Staffers will travel around a region of the state, visiting areas that highlight issues important to state and local government. Agendas could be shaped by a variety of factors, including issues of national significance, natural resource conflicts, opportunities or success stories, state and local economic conditions or specific legislative requests. For example, a tour may highlight:

- Responsible and efficient development of federal minerals
- Proper siting of renewable energy development
- The importance of public land grazing to agricultural operations and maintaining wildlife habitat on private and public lands



Wyoming County Commissioners Association

P.O. Box 86 • 408 W 23rd Street • Cheyenne, WY • 82003
(307) 632-5409 • www.wyo-wcca.org

- The impact of federal regulations and policies, such as the following, have on local governments and economies:
 - o The definition of “Waters of the United States”
 - o The listing of endangered and threatened species
 - o Emission restrictions under the Clean Air Act
 - o Bureau of Reclamation diversion and storage policies
 - o Conservation measures, including those on private lands, under the Biden Administration’s 30x30 Campaign
- The management of wilderness study areas proposed for release or redesignation
- Recreational opportunities on public lands
- Active forest management and the impacts wildfire has on the communities around it
- State and local management of wildlife migration corridors

Staffers would hear from a variety of speakers as the tour progresses, possibly including legislators, state and federal agency personnel, the Governor’s Office, county commissioners, city officials and public land users, such as representatives from agriculture, energy, recreation, sportsmen, conservation and mining. While the tour would take place in one part of Wyoming each year, many of the topics covered will be of statewide relevance.

The agenda for each region would be developed by the counties hosting the tour that year, with input from the Congressional Tour Subcommittee and WCCA

Tour Regions

We anticipate the first tour will be hosted by the Big Horn Basin counties—Washakie, Park, Hot Springs and Big Horn—during August 2022 Congressional recess. Subsequent tours will be hosted by different and yet-to-be-determined regions of the state, ultimately including all 23 counties. Possible regions could be:

Big Horn Basin	Northeast Wyoming	Western Wyoming	South/Central Wyoming	Southeast Wyoming
Park	Sheridan	Teton	Fremont	Niobrara
Big Horn	Johnson	Lincoln	Sweetwater	Albany
Hot Springs	Campbell	Sublette	Natrona	Platte
Washakie	Crook	Uinta	Carbon	Goshen
	Weston			Laramie
	Converse			



Wyoming County Commissioners Association

P.O. Box 86 • 408 W 23rd Street • Cheyenne, WY • 82003
(307) 632-5409 • www.wyo-wcca.org

Program Cost and Projected Budget

We estimate the cost of hosting a single staffer, including travel, lodging, food, transportation and events, to be \$2,500. We plan to host between 8 and 10 staffers for the first year and increase attendance by 2-3 staffers in subsequent years.

In addition to the costs of attendance, WCCA has retained Jennifer Johnson, with [Big Horn Public Affairs](#), to assist with staffer recruitment, planning and organizing the tour and coordinating the Wyoming tour with Utah and NEWY tours to avoid scheduling conflicts and overlap. Ms. Johnson has assisted the NEWY group with their tour in recent years and comes highly recommended from northeast counties and cities.

Based on these considerations, the following is an estimated budget for the program.

Expense	Estimated
Four nights lodging	\$8,000.00
Airfare	\$17,000.00
Tour bus	\$5,000.00
Big Horn Public Affairs	\$15,000.00
Estimated meals (assuming several meals are partner contributed – see below)	\$2,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$1,500.00
Total	\$48,500.00

Program Funding

FNRPA Funding

WCCA, on behalf of Wyoming counties, submitted a request on August 26, 2021 for FNRPA funding in the amount of \$25,000 per year for 2022, 2023 and 2024 for a total of \$75,000. The Governor's Office has granted our request for 2022. We are waiting for a response for funding for 2023 and 2024.

County Contributions

We anticipate counties will contribute funds annually to help cover the costs of the tour. WCCA's membership will consider annual county contributions at our February meeting, which is expected to be in the range of \$10,000-\$25,000.



Wyoming County Commissioners Association

P.O. Box 86 • 408 W 23rd Street • Cheyenne, WY • 82003
(307) 632-5409 • www.wyo-wcca.org

Municipal Contributions

While municipalities could contribute to tour costs, we are not presently including them in the funding model. We anticipate cities within the tour region for that year could assist with funding if they so choose. Soliciting city contributions would be led by the hosting counties.

Private Funding

There may be opportunities for private entities to help fund the tour, but such contributions would be subject to Congressional ethics rules. Generally, under House and Senate ethics rules, no House or Senate Member, officer, or employee may knowingly accept a gift unless the gift falls into an exception. A gift is “any gratuity, favor, discount, entertainment, hospitality, loan, forbearance, or other item having monetary value. The term includes gifts of services, training, transportation, lodging, and meals, whether provided in kind, by purchase of a ticket, payment in advance, or reimbursement after the expense has been incurred.”

One exception may provide some funding flexibility for the Congressional Tour program. Under ethics rules, members, officers and employees may accept an offer of free attendance to a “widely attended” event if: (a) invited by the event organizer (not a fiscal sponsor), (b) at least 25 people from outside Congress are expected to attend (c) attendance at the event is open to the general public, individuals from throughout a given industry or profession, or to a range of persons interested in an issue; and (d) attendance is appropriate to the recipient’s professional duties.

Under such an exception, private partners may host public events during the tour to which staffers would be invited.

Congressional Tour Subcommittee Members

The Congressional Tour Subcommittee is a subset of the Agriculture, Water State and Public Lands and Energy and Environments. Its members are:

- Joel Bousman, Sublette County
- Colleen Faber, Campbell County
- Christi Haswell, Sheridan County
- D.G. Reardon Campbell County
- Robert Short, Converse County
- Lloyd Thiel, Park County